Opportunity

The Ford Foundation came to Yellow Wood Associates for help in formulating and implementing a new wealth-based approach to rural community and economic development in the United States. The approach is intended to reverse the exploitation and isolation of rural areas and engender targeted investments that increase the contribution of rural America to regional economies for shared benefit.

Approach

As managing grantee, Yellow Wood worked closely with the Program Officer and colleagues in the field to formulate a wealth creation approach for the Wealth Creation in Rural Communities - Building Sustainable Livelihoods Initiative. Yellow Wood’s roles have included participant, thought leader, chronicler, disseminator, connector, facilitator, presenter, coach, trainer, measurement expert, archivist, and creator of a common language and a systems framework around wealth creation. Yellow Wood continues to guide work on the ground in three high poverty regions while sharing responsibilities for ongoing management with the Steering Committee of the WealthWorks Collaborative including the Center for Rural Entrepreneurship, Aspen Institute’s Community Strategies Group, Rural Support Partners, and McIntosh Seed.

Outcome

Yellow Wood worked closely with ten wealth creation value chain managers engaged in constructing value chains in housing, energy, tourism, agriculture, impact investing, and forestry. The four chains that have been active on the ground since 2010 have documented significant impacts, including: introducing new ideas that have changed behavior; developing skills that result in effective market access; creating new relationships and increased trust among diverse value chain partners and supporters; installing new physical and information-related infrastructure; conserving energy and improving the quality of agriculture practices; changing resource allocation decisions of government and the private sector in support of the value chain; and increasing the amount of internal and external investment in increased productivity. Each value chain is also developing structures for ownership and control that keep wealth local.

Client

The Ford Foundation (www.fordfoundation.org) supports visionary leaders and organizations on the frontlines of social change worldwide. Their goals are to strengthen democratic values, reduce poverty and injustice, promote international cooperation, and advance human achievement.